Focus

New law reflects advances in resource protection well construction

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Introduction

The Department of Ecology estimates there are approximately 6,000 resource-protection wells and 10,000 water wells constructed in Washington every year. The agency is responsible for issuing licenses and collecting fees for all well-related activities.

A "resource protection well" is a boring used to determine the existence or movement of pollutants within an underground formation. A "water well" is defined as any excavation that is constructed with the intention of accessing groundwater.

On March 14, Gov. Gary Locke signed a new law that modifies the current state statute to better reflect new methods for constructing resource-protection wells and updates the state fee structure for all wells. Language for the new measure, Senate Bill 6624, was developed by Ecology's well-construction technical advisory group.

What does the new law do?

The new law addresses resource-protection wells by:

- Providing new definitions for "environmental investigation" and "remediation" wells.
- Setting fees for environmental investigation at $40 for construction of up to four wells per project and $10 for each additional well. There is no fee for wells constructed to sample soil or vapor.

The new law also updates the state fee structure for all wells by:

- Allowing fee refunds if construction has not begun and Ecology receives a refund request within 180 days of receiving the fees.

Next steps

Ecology will need to update its existing resource-protection well construction rules to reflect the changes in the new law. When we begin the rulemaking process we will inform you regarding the dates, locations and times for any public meetings and hearings surrounding proposed rule changes and direct to a web page with a draft of the rule amendments.

For more information

For more information, contact Ecology's well drilling coordinator **Dick Szymarek** at (360) 407-6648 (e-mail: rszy461@ecy.wa.gov).

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